

LINCOLN LORE

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SALMON P. CHASE — SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY

The appointment of Salmon Portland Chase to a cabinet position virtually brought into the official family the Secretary's daughter, Kate. While Lincoln was aware that the appointment of Montgomery Blair would result in acquiring the support of the famous Blair triumvirate, he could not have anticipated that the daughter of the newly appointed Secretary would aspire to a political partnership with her father which would stop at nothing short of promoting the senior member's bid for the presidency.

Chase was educated by his paternal uncle, Bishop Philander Chase, for the Episcopal clergy. While the inoculation did not take, there is no evidence that Chase lost any of the pious characteristics which the religious environment of his formative years had bequeathed to him. If the cabinet had chosen a chaplain from among their group, Chase would have been the best qualified candidate.

Bishop Chase may have had some consolation in seeing his protégé, after graduating from Dartmouth, start out in the teaching profession. When, however, the youth began reading law in the office of William Wirt at Washington, it became quite certain that with the moral issue of slavery foremost in the political arena, he would finally enter the field of politics.

Having been admitted to the bar in Ohio in June, 1830, upon locating in Cincinnati, a border city, he was continually brought in touch with the legal aspects of the slavery controversy and he soon became known as the "Attorney-General for runaway negroes."

Starting out as a Whig, by 1841 he had cast his lot with the struggling Liberty party and with its absorption by the Free Soilers and cooperation of the Anti-Slavery Democrats, Chase was sent to the United States Senate in 1848. By 1851 he became affiliated with the regular Democratic party and through the collaboration of several anti-slavery groups, which later became affiliated with the Republican party, Chase was elected governor of Ohio in 1855.

By 1860 the Republican party had come into its stride and at their Ohio State Convention in 1860 resolved that at the National Republican Convention in Chicago, "they would indicate as their first choice and recommend to said Convention the name of Salmon P. Chase" for the presidency. The results of the Chicago Convention are

known to all but although Chase failed to receive much support outside Ohio he nevertheless put himself in a position to be selected as a member of Lincoln's Cabinet.

After the election in the fall Mr. Chase returned from Springfield where "at Mr. Lincoln's request" he had gone for a conference and on January 9, 1861, in answer to a letter from Thad Stevens, he gave a frank expression

SALMON PORTLAND CHASE

Born in Cornish, N. H., Jan. 13, 1808

Graduated from Dartmouth, 1826

Established a classical school for boys in Washington, D. C.

Studied Law with William Wirt

Admitted to Maryland bar, 1830

Became successful lawyer in Cincinnati

Assisted in establishing Liberty party, 1841

Presided over Free Soil Convention, 1848

Sent to U. S. Senate by coalition of Free Soilers and Ohio Anti-Slavery Democratic party, 1848

Joined the regular Democratic party, 1851

Elected governor of Ohio, 1855

Again sent to Congress, 1860

Received appointment as Secretary of Treasury, March 5, 1861

Resigned as Secretary of Treasury, June 30, 1864

Appointed Chief Justice of the United States, Dec. 6, 1864

as to his opinion of the President Elect: "Mr. Lincoln conversed frankly and fully. *He is a man to be depended on.* He may, as all men may, make mistakes; but the cause will be want of sufficient information, not unsoundness of judgment or of devotion to principle."

Critics of Lincoln's Cabinet choices have been slow to bring any charges of incompetence against the Secretary of the Treasury and with Seward and Stanton he has usually been considered one of the "Big Three" among Lincoln's advisors. He has left his imprint upon both United States cur-

rency and coin. Known as father of the Greenbacks, he placed the nation on a sound financial basis and on the coins of the nation he was primarily responsible for the inscription "In God We Trust."

Not only was Lincoln continually disturbed by generals more anxious to fight political opponents than the enemy, but in his official family possibly the most efficient member of all continually was nursing political ambition. The charming Kate Chase daughter of the Secretary, may have been more responsible than we know for keeping constantly alive in her father's mind the hope that he one day might be President. Convinced of her father's superior ability she refused to become resigned to his withdrawal from the ranks of available candidates for the Presidency even after he had been defeated at Chicago. Figuratively she always wore through her father's life a campaign badge: "Chase for President."

Much has been said about political factions in Pennsylvania with which Lincoln had to contend in making cabinet appointments but it is doubtful if any group gave him so much trouble as the Chase adherents of Ohio. If two political pamphlets which apparently originated with the pro-Chase contingency had never been published, history would have had a much better opinion of Lincoln's Secretary of the Treasury, and we might add of his daughter, as well.

It is accepted generally that she played a major part in keeping a nucleus of Ohio politicians continually sold on her father's presidential availability. Her influence was not retarded by her marriage in 1863 to the multimillionaire senator, William Sprague, of Rhode Island. Her social contacts with unlimited funds on which to draw for entertainment, were made with her father's welfare in view.

It seems altogether fitting that Chase and his daughter Kate, should be buried side by side in Spring Grove Cemetery at Cincinnati.